

**Amendments to the Claims:**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

1. (previously presented) A building panel of sandwich construction comprising a core and spaced metal sheets fixed to opposite major faces of said core, said core including opposite end edges which extend between said opposite major faces thereof, said panel having opposite major surfaces and opposite longitudinal edge regions, each of said metal sheets comprising opposite edge regions which form the longitudinal edge regions of the panel and which extend inwardly of said opposite major surfaces of said panel to form a pair of connecting elements at each edge region of the panel, said connecting elements extending across the end edges of said core and being formed as either a channel or a projection, the connecting elements of the longitudinal edge regions of the panel being adapted to interfit with the connecting elements of a respective one of the longitudinal edge regions of another panel to provide for interconnection of the panel with another panel and to form a load bearing region capable of accommodating loading applied to the interconnected panels, wherein at least one of said metal sheets has a paper covering bonded thereto so that said metal sheet forms one of the major surfaces of the panel, wherein the paper covering provides a surface characteristic that enables said major surfaces of the panel to be finished to appear continuous by using finishing techniques, wherein the panel is configured such that the major surfaces of the interconnected panels incorporating the paper covering are aligned and in substantially abutting relationship to form a continuous surface, wherein said finishing techniques are applied to the major surfaces of the interconnected panels.

2. (previously presented) A building panel according to claim 1, further comprising a generally planar abutment surface at each longitudinal edge region, the abutment surface extending generally perpendicular to said major surfaces of said panel and wherein the connecting elements are disposed inwardly of the at least one major surface of the panel having the paper covering with said abutment surfaces being disposed between said major surface and said connecting elements, wherein the paper covering gives the panel a surface characteristic which is substantially the same as a plasterboard panel and wherein, in use, the panel is operative to form an exposed surface by connection of the panel with another

panel through interfitting of respective ones of the connecting elements, or by abutment of an edge of a plasterboard panel against a respective one of said abutment surfaces.

3. (previously presented) A building panel according to claim 1, wherein said channel is generally C shaped in cross section incorporating opposite walls interconnected by a substantially flat base portion.

4. (previously presented) A building panel according to claim 3, wherein the angle between the opposite walls and the base portion is approximately 90° so that the channel forms a part box section.

5. (previously presented) A building panel according to claim 1, wherein the projection interfits in nesting engagement within the channel of said another panel.

6. (previously presented) A building panel according to claim 1, wherein the projection has an outer surface which is complementary to the inner surface of the channel so that on interconnection of the panels, the projection is in engagement with substantially all of the inner surface of the channel of said another panel.

7. (previously presented) A building panel according to claim 1, wherein the projection is operative to interfit with a channel of said another panel in a snap fit arrangement.

8. (previously presented) A building panel of sandwich construction comprising a core and spaced metal sheets fixed to opposite major faces of said core, said core including opposite end edges which extend between said opposite major faces thereof, said panel having opposite major surfaces and opposite longitudinal edge regions, each of said metal sheets comprising opposite edge regions which form the longitudinal edge regions of the panel and which extend inwardly of said opposite major surfaces of said panel to form a pair of connecting elements at each edge region of the panel, said connecting elements extending across the end edges of said core and being formed as either a channel or a projection, the connecting elements of the longitudinal edge regions of the panel being

adapted to interfit with the connecting elements of a respective one of the longitudinal edge regions of another panel to provide for interconnection of the panel with another panel and to form a load bearing region capable of accommodating loading applied to the interconnected panels, wherein at least one of said metal sheets has a paper covering bonded thereto so that said metal sheet forms one of the major surfaces of the panel, wherein the paper covering provides a surface characteristic that enables said major surfaces of the panel to be finished to appear continuous by using finishing techniques, wherein the panel is configured such that the major surfaces of the interconnected panels incorporating the paper covering are aligned and in substantially abutting relationship to form a continuous surface, wherein said finishing techniques are applied to the major surfaces of the interconnected panels, wherein the projection is operative to interfit with a channel of said another panel in a snap fit arrangement, wherein the channel includes a re-entrant portion on its inner surface, and wherein the projection includes a crest portion on its outer surface and wherein the crest portion on the projection of one panel is arranged to engage with the re-entrant portion of the channel of said another panel in a snap fit arrangement.

9. (previously presented) A building panel according to claim 1, wherein the edge region of the major surface of the panel incorporates a recess to facilitate concealment of a joint between the panel and said another panel by using finishing techniques.

10. (previously presented) A building panel according to claim 1, wherein said paper is bonded to said substrate using a reactive hot melt adhesive.

11. (previously presented) A building panel according to claim 1, wherein said paper is bonded directly onto said metal substrate.

12.-13. (canceled)

14. (previously presented) A building panel according to claim 1, wherein the metal substrate is selected from the group consisting of mild steel, aluminum, tin, stainless steel, and galvanized steel.

15. (previously presented) A building panel according to claim 1, wherein the gauge of the metal substrate is between 0.3 to 1 mm.

16.-18. (canceled)

19. (previously presented) A building system including a building panel and a separate reinforcing element, the building panel comprising a core and having spaced metal sheets fixed to opposite major faces of said core, said core including opposite end edges which extend between said opposite major faces thereof, said panel having opposite major surfaces and longitudinal edge regions, said metal sheets including opposite edge regions which form longitudinal edge regions of the panel, wherein said edge regions extend inwardly of said opposite major surfaces of said panel and across each end edge of said core to provide for interconnection of the panel with another panel and to form a load bearing region capable of accommodating loading applied to interconnected panels, and each edge region of the panel is profiled to form a pair of connecting elements which extend across the end edges of said core, the connecting elements of the longitudinal edge regions of the panel being adapted to interfit with the connecting element of a respective one of the longitudinal edge regions of another panel, each connecting element being formed as either a channel or a projection which cooperate to interfit, each channel incorporating opposite walls interconnected by a substantially flat base portion, and wherein each projection is shaped to interfit with the channel of said another panel and includes opposite walls interconnected by a substantially flat bridging portion, the panel being configured such that the major surfaces of the interconnected panels are aligned and in substantially abutting relationship to form a substantially continuous surface and wherein the reinforcing element is operative to be installed at a joint formed on connection of the panel with said another panel and is secured in place by locating said reinforcing element between and in connection with the interfitting connecting elements of each panel to conceal the reinforcing element which is operative to improve the load bearing characteristics of the interconnected panels and wherein said reinforcing element includes at least one engagement part which is generally U-shaped and located between said interfitting channel and projection of the interconnected panels.

## 20.-21. (canceled)

22. (previously presented) A building system according to claim 19, wherein the reinforcing element includes spaced apart engagement parts interconnected by a web.

23. (previously presented) A building system according to claim 19, wherein the angle between the opposite walls of each channel and the base portion is approximately 90° to form a part box section.

24. (previously presented) A building system according to claim 19, wherein the angle between the opposite walls of each projection and the bridging portion is approximately 90° to form a part box section.

25. (previously presented) A building system according to claim 19, wherein the opposite walls of each channel include a re-entrant inner surface, and wherein the outer surface of the opposite walls of each projection include a crest and wherein the crest portion on the projection of one panel is arranged to engage with the re-entrant inner portion of the channel of said another panel in a snap fit arrangement.

26. (previously presented) A building system according to claim 19, wherein the connecting elements are adapted to interfit with the connecting elements of said another panel and with the reinforcing elements in a snap fit arrangement.

27. (previously presented) A building system according to claim 19, wherein the building panel further includes at least one abutment surface at each longitudinal edge region, the at least one abutment surface extending generally perpendicular to said major surfaces of said panel and is disposed between a respective one of the major surfaces and said connecting elements.

28. (previously presented) A building system according to claim 19, wherein a paper covering is bonded to at least one of the metal sheets so that said paper covered metal sheet forms one of the major surfaces of the panel.

29. (original) A building system according to claim 28, wherein said paper is bonded to said metal sheet using a reactive hot metal adhesive.

30. (previously presented) A building system according to claim 28, wherein said paper is bonded directly onto said metal sheet.

31. (previously presented) A building system according to claim 28, wherein the metal sheet incorporating the paper covering is formed in continuous lengths using a laminating process to adhere the paper covering to said metal sheet.

32.-37. (canceled)

38. (previously presented) A building panel comprising a metal sheet substrate and a paper covering bonded to said substrate, wherein said paper covered metal sheet forms a major surface of the panel with the paper covering providing a surface characteristic to that major surface that is structured to be finished using conventional finishing techniques, and wherein said metal sheet includes opposite edges which are shaped to form edge regions of the panel, each edge region being formed to include a connecting element which extends along that edge region and which allows for interconnection of the panel with another panel, and wherein when interconnected, the major surfaces of the interconnected panels are aligned and in substantially abutting relationship to enable a continuous surface to be obtained on applying the conventional finishing techniques to the paper covered major surfaces of the interconnected panels.

39. (previously presented) A building panel according to claim 38, wherein one connecting element is formed as a channel and the other formed as a projection, the projection at one edge region being configured to interfit within the channel of the other

edge region of said another panel to form to a load bearing region capable of accommodating loading applied to the interconnected panels.

40. (canceled)

41. (new) A building panel according to claim 8, wherein the connecting elements of the panel are sufficiently resilient so that the projection and channel are drawn into engagement on interconnecting of the panel with another panel in the snap fit arrangement through interengagement of the crest and re-entrant portions.

42. (new) A method of building a partition having a continuous surface comprising the steps of:

providing a plurality of panels, each panel comprising a metal sheet substrate and a paper covering bonded to said substrate, said paper covered metal sheet forming a major surface of the panel with the paper covering providing a surface characteristic to that major surface that is structured to be finished using conventional finishing techniques;

interconnecting the panels so that the major surfaces of the interconnected panels are aligned and in substantially abutting relationship; and

applying the finishing techniques to the paper covered major surfaces of the interconnected panels to form a continuous surface across the interconnected panels.

43. (new) A method according to claim 42, further comprising the step of: forming a load bearing region at the joint between the interconnected panels, the load bearing region being capable of accommodating loading applied to the interconnected panels.

44. (new) A method according to claim 43, further comprising the step of: locating a reinforcing element within the joint between adjacent panels to increase the load bearing capacity of the load bearing region.

45. (new) A method according to claim 42, wherein the panels are interconnected by interfitting of a projection formed on one panel within a channel formed in the other panel.

46. (new) A method according to claim 42, wherein plaster based finishing techniques are applied to the interconnected panels to form the continuous surface.